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# The Jewish Quarterly Review.

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JANUARY, 1890.

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## JEWISH PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION AND SAMSON RAPHAEL HIRSCH.

THE present article does not profess to be a biographical sketch of S. R. Hirsch. I do not think that the time has arrived when such a biography could or should be written. Great as the influence was which he wielded during his lifetime, the real fruits of his activity are only just beginning to ripen. Before an account of his life can be of lasting advantage, his name must have first become more the common property of the Jewish nation at large. Personal animosities, which, although almost entirely silenced, may nevertheless still be lurking here and there, must completely vanish. His works must first become known to a greater circle of readers by translations from the German, partly into Hebrew, and partly into the vernacular tongues of countries outside Germany. Moreover a sketch of the life of S. R. Hirsch would either by far exceed the space which can possibly be assigned to an article in a Review, or it would have to be contracted so as to degenerate into a dry catalogue of accomplishments which were possessed by him, without the possibility of properly illustrating even one of them. All I propose to do is to try to turn the attention of the English Jewish public to a man who is little known to them, whose influence is nevertheless not without effect upon some of them, though they may be unconscious of it; to set in its proper light only one of the many great achievements of this man; namely his mode of procedure in evolving the ideas of which Judaism is the

representative, and to try to recognise the real position he occupies among the philosophers of Jewish religion. All this is only a small but not an unimportant point in his long life, so full of profound thought, of indefatigable activity; but I think it best not to attempt any more for the present. Some readers, on perusing the following pages, will perhaps suspect me of suffering from that disease which Macaulay wittily calls the *lues Boswelliana*, "the disease of admiration to which all biographers, translators, editors, all, in short, who employ themselves in illustrating the lives or the writings of others, are peculiarly exposed." It is a suspicion which I am particularly anxious to rouse. For only by means of such wondering doubt as to who that man may be who is able to awaken such admiration as a hero of thought and action, can I hope to reap the gratification of inducing some of my readers to investigate his works and deeds for themselves. About the results of such investigation I am unconcerned. —Perhaps it is also necessary to mention that I am in no way related to the deceased Rabbi who is the subject of this article. The identity of surname is a mere coincidence.

There is no period in Jewish history in which Jews have not been influenced by external events and circumstances. No man ever fails to be so affected; it is in his nature, it is one of the elements which constitute man. Jews were not, in reference to their human instincts, placed by the Creator either above or below humanity. Whether considered as forming a religion or a race, or both, they are equally with others a factor in the aggregate of beings of which mankind consists. It might therefore be considered as a truth so evident that it were superfluous to mention it, that Jews are and were at all ages, children of their time. How comes it then that this saying nevertheless conveys no truism, that it expresses a fact, the enunciation of which is not mere commonplace, but a truth of which it is necessary that we should now and then be reminded, which has been and may be again disputed? The reason is this. Whatever theorists may advance to the contrary, it is indisputable that the Jews form a factor, a well defined, well distinguishable element in the vast multitude of separate groups of which mankind is composed. Ignore it or avow it, rejoice at it or regret it, the fact is not subject to the views, to the wishes, of this or that philosopher or moralist. Jews have collectively characteristics of their own; they possess them and adhere to them, or rather, they are possessed and held fast by them in spite of the innumerable vicissitudes in their history, in spite of the strongest in-

fluences from without, tending to destroy and utterly efface everything which might stamp the mark of individuality on the children of Jacob. Heaven and earth have combined to amalgamate them with the rest of humanity, to cause them to be as completely lost among the nations of the earth as the Phoenicians and Trojans of old; but neither different climate nor different soil has proved uncongenial to the vitality of that distinctiveness. Crime of the deepest dye, virtuous aspirations in point of intention of the highest order, have combined, have acted separately, to annihilate it, by brute force, by gentle persuasions, by contemptuous degradation, by enticing allurements. But neither could wholesale massacre turn, nor the most degrading laws shame, nor the most flattering prospects decoy the Jews out of their peculiarities.

But are then the Jews an order of beings by themselves? Is the construction of their bodies, the constitution of their intellects; are their moral perceptions, their susceptibilities for pain and pleasure, different from those of the rest of mankind? Certainly not. The Jews are neither more nor less than human. They are, however, one of the many groups, which, though in the aggregate making up the sum of mankind, yet are totally different from one another. But those distinguishing marks are of different strength, of greater or smaller tenacity in the various groups. Many of the latter are so seriously influenced by external events as not to be able to sustain their individuality; they amalgamate with the groups with which they come in contact. The Jews on the contrary are so essentially impregnated by that which gives them their individuality, that no influences, however strong, have hitherto been able to obliterate and finally extinguish their special characteristics. Under such circumstances it is certainly worth noticing that even they must obey the general human law of being acted upon by the modifying influences of time and circumstances. It is certainly worth while to inquire in how far the changes thus wrought are mechanical, in how far they are chemical; and where the boundary lies beyond which no motors from without are able to penetrate. For while it is true that powerful agencies have been constantly at work to deprive them of their peculiarities; these efforts from without are as nothing when compared with the tendencies destructive to that individuality which were unintermittently at work within the body of Judaism. Susceptible of every change which is going on around them, keenly alive to their solitary position whenever it proves a source of degradation or oppression; sensitive to every sneer and gibe so lavishly bestowed on whatever is rightly or wrongly considered by

others to be peculiar to them, highly impressible, whenever it is permitted them, to the revolutions which take place in the religious, social, and political conditions of the people among whom they dwell; there were always men in their midst who thought it to be their duty not only themselves to cast off everything which reminded others of that exclusive and solitary position, but also to induce their brethren to join them in such efforts. They actually believed in the possibility of such a consummation. They saw in that which singles out the Jews only some outer garb, of which it was obligatory and perfectly easy to divest themselves at will, partially or entirely. More than that. The Jews, whenever allowed to do so, have always taken a lively part in the progress of knowledge; they never were behind their time in mental and intellectual movements. Nor have the checks put upon them with the purpose of excluding them from such participation always proved efficacious. Then that universal propensity of imitation has always been especially prominent in them; the desire to be like others has been the cause of many of their excellencies, of many of their foibles. But, however successful such incentives from within were with some individuals, or with some communities, in certain localities and at certain times, it was they who gave themselves up to these levelling influences that were the losers. Judaism was lost to them. They were lost among the nations and their place knows them no more; Judaism in its permanent existence was not affected.

But there were other and greater men than those alluded to, who wanted to bring about a union of that which appeared conflicting between *Judaism* and the high and noble aspirations of *other* nations. Their ambition was to be and to remain Jews, and at the same time to enjoy all those intellectual privileges which were the pride and the glory of the great men around them. A noble ambition indeed! The Jews had been struck by the great efforts of the Greek philosophers in the scrutiny of self, God, and nature. They learnt to recognise all that was divinely beautiful in the Greek forms of expressing thought, both in prose and poetry. The Arab literature with its modifications of Greek philosophy, with its original forms of poetry and style dazzled their eyes. Was it not a noble aspiration to reconcile these elements with Jewish lore and Jewish practices? To reconcile. Did they then conflict, and if so, was a reconciliation possible? They never stopped to inquire. Conflict certainly there was. Foreign elements were sought to be identified with Jewish ideas and customs. Conceptions and views as divergent as possible had to be declared iden-

tical. Only one of three things was possible. The results of extraneous knowledge being recognised as indisputable, the Jewish elements had to yield and make room for the introduction of those intruders who henceforth were to have the predominance or the sole mastery of the field, or a *modus vivendi* had to be found between the two. The foreign elements being assumed to be unassailable, but the Jewish principles and laws equally so, a bridge had to be constructed to span the gap between the two opposite fields of cognition, both had to be brought to one level. Of course neither of the two came off scot-free. On either side many a picturesque hill had to be levelled down to the ground. Many a ravine so useful in saving the country from inundations had to be stopped up. But what will not consummate engineering skill accomplish? Why should not Jews have something to show in the way of philosophy of religion? Were Saadiah, Gabirol, Maimonides less earnest in their adherence to their religion than Scotus Erigena, Thomas Aquinas, Albertus Magnus to theirs? Or were the former less acquainted with the philosophical doctrines of their time; were they of smaller intellectual capacity than the latter? Certainly not. The truth is, the mode of philosophising reached these two groups, independently, by the same law of nature. It never occurred to them to doubt its validity. The one group as well as the other, and many more of the same aspirations and tendencies, proceeded spontaneously, and without knowing of each other, on very similar paths. Both the one and the other group possessed a knowledge of Aristotle at second or third hand. His doctrines were acknowledged by them, but had to be moulded and remoulded so as to harmonize with, or, at least, so as not to be in direct opposition to their religious professions. But neither cared to follow up their positions to their last consequences. And when we turn to that Jewish philosopher, whose philosophical work was really of influence, was read and highly valued by the greatest men in Israel, can he be said to have bridged over the gulf in a satisfactory manner? Are the rational explanations which he gives of many of the precepts of the Mosaic law of such a nature as to satisfy the doubting mind? Would a waverer in the field of religion, hesitating whether to fulfil the enactments as laid down in Maimonides' *Yad Hachazaka* or to abandon the practice of these precepts as irrational—would he be converted into an ardent observer of these laws merely by taking into consideration the arguments preferred in the philosophical work of the same author? Does not the gap, which

Maimonides would fain have filled up between Judaism and that which at his time was called philosophy, yawn between the *Yad Hachazaka* and the *More Nebuchim* of the same man?

This is what many people of his and of succeeding centuries have seen. The third possibility alluded to became a reality in these men. They were not prepared to surrender the faith and the practices of their fathers for doctrines that came to them in foreign garb from without. Nor were they satisfied to balance themselves on the rope which was thought to connect the two opposite banks. They therefore rejected every guidance from philosophy and lived only in their religion. It has become a custom to divide the adherents and opponents of Maimonides into two parties, and to call his followers the lovers of light and knowledge, and his antagonists the lovers of darkness and the haters of science. It will take some time, some centuries perhaps, before such irrational cant will disappear from the books of history; before either of these parties will have its own place allotted it in the mental and religious revolutions of mankind. When Kant, in conscious opposition to all philosophers who preceded him, denies that pure reason will ever be able to demonstrate the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, and nevertheless maintains this God and that immortality, and asserts that the belief in them is demanded by practical reason;—when he investigates one by one the philosophical proofs of these doctrines as given by his predecessors only to reject them, and yet is driven to assume their propositions by his moral consciousness; it will certainly not enter the mind of any sensible being to accuse Kant of being a lover of darkness, an opponent of the free use of the mental capacities of man. How many men are there, even in our days—if any there be—who will subscribe to Maimonides' philosophical doctrines; who will adopt as their own, who will call really rational, every one of the explanations he gives of the various Jewish laws? And why then load with reproaches the men who saw the insufficiency of Maimonides' method, and in the choice between the elements from without and that which was offered them, the Jews, by their own Judaism, declared for the latter? They did not trouble themselves to find a mode of conciliation; some of them from incapacity, some from unwillingness, and some from a consciousness of the impossibility of arriving at any satisfactory result. In a similar manner it has become a custom with a certain section of Jewish scholars to speak in terms of condemnation, and in terms of condemnation only, of the mystical element which played so important a part in the history of the Jewish religion. Let us assume, for the sake of argument, such

Mysticism to be foreign to the doctrines and objects of Judaism. Let us grant that all and every single proposition averred by the Cabbala rests on error. Let us admit that all these profound mystical speculations rooted in Neo-Platonism, and in some other more ancient systems, were imported from without and adapted to the Jewish beliefs and customs. Let it be even so. Are therefore the Jews to be blamed for having done that which all thinking men of Europe have done at certain times? Why should not the Jews be also, in respect to Mysticism, the children of their time? There is certainly nothing disparaging to the Jews in the fact that they were in some respects the forerunners of a time in which Mysticism was one of the powerful weapons by which the authority of the schools was effectively undermined, and the way paved for modern philosophy. For Mysticism is one of the human instincts. It prompts men to seek a profounder knowledge of, a closer communion with things supernatural, with the Deity. Neither the teachings of Aristotle, nor the higher ideas of Neo-Platonism could satisfy that craving. The supposed Areopagite Dionysius, Scotus Erigena, Master Eckhart, Nicholas Cusanus, Pico of Mirandula, Paracelsus, Giordano Bruno, Jacob Böhme, and many, many more, are treated with the greatest respect by the historiographers of philosophy. A proper place is assigned to each of these men, and to the followers and schools connected with their names. Their teachings are expounded, their greater or lesser importance in the development of intellectual knowledge carefully weighed. Several of these men had taken essential parts of their systems from the Jewish Cabbala. Why then should not the Cabbalists be treated with the same respect, with the same deference, by the Jews? To treat them exclusively in a condemnatory manner, to have nothing to spare for them except sneers and derision, shows little of the true spirit of historical research.

But when we come to consider that which may be called the philosophical portion of this Jewish Mysticism, we meet with propositions of which it may well be doubted whether they reproduce thoughts which are inherent in Judaism, and are consequently evolved out of it, whether they are not rather such ideas which, although in themselves not antagonistic to anything Jewish, are yet the fruits of a cogitation outside Judaism, brought in harmony with its tenets and pronounced objects. But, while in philosophy it depended upon the frame of mind of the philosopher whether philosophy or religion should have the ascendancy in the conflict, in the case of Mysticism it was invariably adopted to make the behests of religion paramount over any opposite conclusions of the



Cabbala. Practically it was the same with the philosophers, and almost without exception with Jews and non-Jews, philosophy was the handmaid of religion. Not a jot was sacrificed, even by the greatest advocates of welding together philosophy with religion, of the latter to the former.

The philosophical researches of the Jews were neither independent nor progressive. Philosophy was as dogmatic as, if not much more so than, religion itself. The philosophy of Aristotle, as far as it could be known from translations and excerpts, had reached its zenith in Avicbron or Gabirol. To him some Christian philosophers of the Middle Ages turned for information, not knowing that they were consulting a Jewish author. In him they found means for harmonising thought, which means Aristotelianism as they knew it, with their particular religious persuasions. For the rest Scholasticism gradually withered; all that was fertile and inspiring in it having been used up long ago. But it took a long time before philosophy came to be that which is in our days dignified by that name. Humanism had first to show to the astonished eye of Europe the real Aristotle, had to disclose the speculations of Plato. The thinkers of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries had to take account of Neo-Platonism. A general wave of Mysticism, which went, in profundity and intenseness of religious craving, much beyond anything the Neo-Platonists could offer, moved the thinking minds of Germany and Italy, and satisfied the spiritual thirst in a much higher degree than was possible for the decrepit, sapless Scholasticism to do.

Pico of Mirandula had taken the Jewish Cabbala within the range of his speculations. Reuchlin discovered for Christian Europe the Hebrew and Rabbinical literature, and added a branch of research and knowledge to those already existing. Reuchlin stood, in his mode of thought, exactly on the level of his age. In literature he was a Humanist; in philosophy he had a leaning to the Mysticism of his time; but he was distinguished among his contemporaries by the immense extent of his reading, by his overpowering love for his newly-discovered Hebrew literature, and by the keenness and purity of his moral perceptions. He eagerly laid hand on all the genuine and supposititious Cabbalistical books he could obtain, and tried to prove Christianity from the Cabbala and the Talmud in the same manner as previous ages had tried to prove it from Aristotle.

The European intellect had then to undergo the friction produced by the struggles for and against the reformation of the Church. The science of nature took a flight never

attempted before. The investigation of nature commenced to be based on observation and experiment instead of mere speculation. The modern philosophy was being gradually prepared step by step. The way was paved by a Telesius, a Campanella, and above all, by Giordano Bruno. The latter showed himself a product of past centuries in his theory of the harmony of contradictories; yet points in his Pantheism to Cusanus, who preceded him, and to Spinoza, by whom he was succeeded, and in the exposition of the nature of his monads, foreshadowed Leibnitz's theory. And thus it took a long time before German, and more particularly English thought, led up to that new era of philosophy which was introduced by Kant, and has not come to a close yet.

The Jews took little or no part in these movements. The reason is threefold. First, oppression was, especially in Germany, of such a nature as to surpass in cruelty even the sufferings they had to undergo in the Middle Ages. Where the right of their existence was questioned, and the confines in which their enemies kept them apart from the bulk of their fellow-men were most justly blessed by them, because they afforded them shelter against violence, where all the levers and resources of the law were put in motion to keep them in a state of degradation, it cannot be wondered at that they remained excluded from the general march of science; that they were unacquainted with the revolutions in the development of knowledge, which—it must not be forgotten—was not among their Christian neighbours the common property of the every-day labourer, tradesman, merchant, but only of the learned few. The second reason was the nature of the religion for which the Jews suffered, and which alone preserved them from extinction. The laws which they observed kept them in breath from the beginning of the year till the end. Every day, every action of life brought its duties. What with others was a mere gratification of bodily desires was with them the fulfilment of God's will. And thus the satisfaction of having, to the best of their intentions, lived up to their duties, richly compensated them for the absence of the comforts and privileges of others; kept their envy down, appeased their many spiritual instincts, made them contented, and armed them with patience and endurance. And thirdly, as for their rational, moral, and purely religious propensities, who can say that, with their Bible, their Talmud, and Midrashim, their More Nebuchim and Choboth Halebaboth, their Cabbala and Mussar Sforim, their Maassa books, and Tseeno Ureno, their spiritual instincts were dead, their moral perceptions blunt, their intellectual capacities

unoccupied, their longing to commune with God ungratified? There was plenty of material for thought and feeling, which they fostered and cultivated, and explored, and discussed, and which made their forcibly isolated position tolerable, and which kept fresh in their souls everything which is noble and sublime in the nature of man.

But things took another turn. Revolutions took place in the intellectual, the social, the political aspects of Europe, in the world of action and the world of thought. The conditions and the ideas of the Jews affected each other reciprocally. The cry for liberty and equality which resounded in every nook and corner, and which, when artificially stifled, broke forth all the more vigorously, penetrated also the abodes and the hearts of the Jews. They ardently longed to take part in the general movement, and to adapt the aspirations of society at large to their faith. The movement among the non-Jews to attain the summit of liberty and of equality could not but overthrow partly or wholly the boundaries which separated the Jews from all participation in the intellectual and political stir of the age. It seemed as if an era were commencing for the Jews, instigated both from within and from without, such as had never existed since the Exile. But that which happened to society at large happened also to the Jews. In the struggle for liberty and equality there were undoubtedly those who not only understood these words in their noblest conception, but also perceived the limits of their feasibility. These were no doubt the best, and at the same time, the most useful benefactors of their age, but their number was small. From these downwards representatives of every shade, every gradation in the conception of these two sublime ideas existed; even to such, and they were the majority, who grasped at these names with enthusiasm and ardour, but without the slightest reflection. They never thought of the confines within which only liberty and equality can be exercised. The very suggestion that such limits existed appeared to them contradictory to the ideas themselves. Liberty unlimited, unbounded, not listening to reason, not tied to any guiding principle; a liberty pure and simple, as they thought, in politics, in religion, in literature, in social life, in family relations; equality in which the good would balance the wicked, the ounce would balance the pound—a liberty and equality than which no greater slavery can be imagined, subversive of every free thought, of every wholesome principle, of obedience to the laws of nature, to the laws of the human heart. A liberty and equality which could not but end in the most unscrupulous oppression, in the direst confusion.

"The words liberty and equality," Schiller says, "resound, and bands of assassins roam about. Women become hyenas, and make terror their sport." A strange coincidence!

Well, of this terrible drama of the macrocosmos of European and American society, we find a faint reflection in the microcosmos of Jewish life. The new departure, which is most conveniently connected with the name of Mendelssohn, showed in its development every shade and gradation of the adaptation of the general ideas, the general revolutions, the general hue and cry, to their own narrow sphere. Every single grade between the two extremes, from the noblest workers in the cause of general enlightenment of their brethren to the lowest instincts of fanaticism, ostensibly for the same purpose, came to the front. All degrees, from the strictest adherence to the written and oral traditions to the most undisguised repudiation of anything and everything which reminded of Judaism, were represented. In nature as in history, it is difficult to fix strict lines of demarcation. It is doubtful whether the last step on this ladder of opinions must be said to be occupied by those so-called enlightened Jews, merchants in a large way of business, scholars in expectation or actual possession of emoluments and honour, who openly abjured Judaism and turned Christians; or whether we have to think in this respect of those who just stopped short of this last proceeding. The vocabulary employed by the advocates of the new direction against such as insisted upon the maintenance of traditions in theory and practice, was not new. It had been long in use by Christians in discussing differences which had a resemblance to the points at issue between Jews and Jews, and it was indiscriminately adopted by the defenders of modern Judaism. Fanaticism, intolerance, self-deception, deception of others, obscurantism, hatred of knowledge, pious frauds, impious frauds, inconsistency, hypocrisy, and scores more of such flatteries were lavishly bestowed upon the adherents of traditional Judaism. This is not the place to inquire whether the accusations were well founded, nor to prove that the defenders of the new direction themselves deserved these charges. The history of the most recent reform movement among the Jews has not been and cannot be written yet. The time may be long in coming, but the time will come when it will be seen against which side some, if not all, of these charges are most justly made.

However, the Jews had taken up with zeal the opportunities offered them. They threw themselves eagerly into the general contest for fame, for wealth, for distinction, for intellectual superiority. There were certainly some among them who

pursued the new paths without remembering for a moment any links that might attach them to their ancient race, any connection with the religious observances of their fathers. But these formed a minority. That mysterious something which singles out the Jew, and stamps him with its mark, is of too indelible a nature not to make itself known and felt even when all influences combine to efface it. Like Faust, who from a life of study and contemplation in his solitary cell, suddenly thrown into the vortex of worldly enjoyments, was reminded by the gentle, weak Gretchen, "but how about thy religion," so the Jew was always reminded of the fact that he was a Jew, however deeply he had suffered himself to sink in the abyss of extraneous ideas and tenets. He could not hesitate to adopt all the good and noble results of the different sets of systems which he found being built up around him. He adopted the systems themselves, and now was at pains to reconcile them in some way or other with Judaism. As before, he did not inquire whether there was a conflict, and if so, whether a reconciliation was possible. Bridges were built in every direction. But unlike previous struggles, it was not religion that now held sway. This time a mode of living was only secured by indulgence on the side of religion. The Jews showed themselves again true children of their time. Until now philosophy had been the handmaid of religion with Jew and non-Jew; it had had to accommodate itself to the requirements of religious faith. Where a reconciliation was impossible, the philosophers consciously excluded such obstinate religious doctrines from the number of questions with which philosophy was entitled to deal. This was different with the modern philosophers. The religious dogmas were always made a portion of the philosophy that was propounded; no question was withdrawn from contemplation; only in case of conflict it was no longer philosophy that had to yield but religion. Albertus Magnus or Thomas Aquinas had banished such doctrines as revelation, the trinity, incarnation, resurrection, from the regions of philosophical inquiry; this was not imitated by Kant, by Fichte, by Schelling. They brought within the cycles of philosophical reasoning not only religion, but their religion. They wanted religion to be the result and outcome of reason, and of reason only, and managed to make the dogmas of their particular church appear to flow naturally out of their philosophy, each of them in his own way, out of his own peculiar system.

I cannot stop to trace all the shades and varieties in the forms religion assumed, as considered from the variously formed philosophical, social, and political points of view.

The Jews in their own way held pace with the general movement. They formed their opinions, or rather their opinions were formed according to the schemes which prevailed in the circles in which they lived. Their consciousness as Jews demanded recognition, and moulds were easily constructed to which their religious convictions had to adjust themselves, so as not to be out of harmony with convictions acquired from other sources. There is no end to the variety in shapes of such casts. The author of each of them was naturally very proud of his invention. He certainly thought his to be the only serviceable one. He thought himself to be strong-minded, of intellectual independence, free from prejudice, neither influenced by tradition nor by authority. Poor infatuations! He did not see how much he was the creature of influences from without; how the strength of his mind lay in his incapacity to resist, how his intellect, if independent in one direction, was so only because he had been warned off that road by others, and forced into other paths from which he was not even able to cast his glance backwards. He did not see that he was free from one prejudice, perhaps because he was subject to a number of others much more whimsical, that he deemed himself to be above authority, because he was the abject slave of many authorities, that he was uninfluenced by tradition because the contemporary influences held him in their bondage. I do not allude here to such as have altogether thrown off every connection with their Jewish brethren, but to those Rabbis, preachers, teachers of religion, who for about a century have been the representatives of the so-called "Modern Judaism."

This "Modern Judaism" is very, very old. It is as old as Judaism itself. From the very first appearance of Judaism it showed itself; it seems as if it is naturally inherent in it. Whatever form it may assume it always shows the same primary motors; impatience of any authority from within, attachment to everything from without. These elements are constant, whilst the forms in which they find their expression vary with the conditions of the age. If these conditions show many varieties of colour, we shall find most, if not all of them, reflected in the "Modern Judaism" of the time. Whether the variable elements in each case are good, bad, or indifferent; whether they are commendable or reprehensible; whether they are rational or irrational, is not at the choice of the "Modern Jew." Wherever the spirit of the influences that surround him direct he has to follow. The attraction from without is so strong, the attachment to his religious tenets so weak; this strength, this weakness is at the bottom of the

"Modern Judaism" of all ages; and always that which is "Modern" in it varies directly, and that which is "Jewish" in it varies inversely, as the extraneous influences. It is "Modern Judaism" which goes like a red thread through the whole history of the Jews, from the time of Moses down to our own time. The books of the Bible abound in examples; the post-biblical history of the Jews is rich in illustrations.

But if "Modern Judaism" is old in point of time, it is also old in another sense of the word. "Modern Judaism," as it appears in its various phases, is in our time antiquated, it is an anachronism, a relic of discarded scientific procedures, a lagging behind the progress and development of knowledge of modern times. For the characteristic of modern science, that which so visibly and perceptibly marks it off from previous centuries, is this; that it does not try to construe *à priori* that which can be grasped by the senses; that it does not build up from some preconceived notions arbitrarily posited truths about things which can be brought within the scope of observation. Instead of starting from a certain general principle under which everything had *volens volens* to be forced, modern science, when considering things visible, palpable, perceptible, starts from observation and experiment, and is not satisfied till the subsequent generalisations have as far as possible been verified. The proper use of induction and deduction, the utilising of either of them exactly where it is suitable, the judicial combination of both methods where it is necessary that they should reach each other the hand—this it is which gave such immense impetus to the human mind, which altered beyond recognition the aspect of the civilised world.

This being so, it would be strange indeed if this modern procedure would have remained without reflection on the Jewish mind. The so-called "Modern Judaism" failed, and fails to this day to participate in this progress of the time, to utilise the improved method of reasoning. It continues its attempts to construe *à priori* that which is above all a subject of observation; to ignore phenomena if they contradict the preconceived notions from which it tries to construe a Judaism as it should be. Whatever set of ideas the spokesman of the modern departure may have been wedded to, forms to him the mould into which he casts not only his religion in a general sense, but his Judaism, and not only his own Judaism, but the Judaism which he would fain force upon others. He argues, that if Judaism is the true religion it must be above all—this, that, or the other—and then he takes Judaism, like another Procrustes, and squeezes, and amputates, and stretches, till he thinks it tolerably fits, and does not more than fit, his

own particular frame. If as is sometimes the case, the author of such a scheme is at various times differently impressed, he gets sometimes dissatisfied with the frame first chosen by him. He remodels and reconstructs it, and goes on squeezing and lopping poor Judaism, till it loses gradually every characteristic mark. Dietary laws, Hebrew language, initiation, are one by one discarded. The sanctity of the Sabbath sinks into some meaningless ceremony in the synagogue, which however does not take place on the seventh day but on the first day of the week. And such process is then dignified with the sonorous name of "developing." It is the kind of development which took place in the minds of Goneril and Regan, the daughters of King Lear. When the latter resigned and surrendered everything to his two daughters, he had reserved for himself a retinue of a hundred knights. But the daughters, when mistresses of the situation, began to reflect on the expediency of his having a hundred followers. They thought them to be too many by half. Regan says :—

"You will return and sojourn with my sister,  
Dismissing half your train."

But whilst thinking further about it she is clearly developing.

"If you will come to me, I entreat you  
To bring but five and twenty, to no more  
Will I give place and notice."

But however fast she is developing, she cannot keep pace with her sister, for Goneril remarks :

"Hear me, my lord,  
What need of five and twenty, ten, or five."

Regan, however is not to be outdone in the art of developing.

"What need one?"

she says, and poor Lear is driven out in storm and cold without a single attendant.

It is the merit of Samson Raphael Hirsch to have applied to Judaism the improved methods of reasoning, which modern times impose on everyone who undertakes the contemplation of subjects which are within the scope of observation. He did so consciously, deliberately, and consistently. He never swerved from his object. He brought into its service the logical acuteness of a truly philosophical intellect, the glowing enthusiasm of loving devotion, the penetrating keenness of minute observation of details, the vast comprehensibility of mind, which darts with true aim at that which is general in the enormous mass of special phenomena. He brought into its service a knowledge of his times, a knowledge of human



nature, a steadiness of purpose, a power of application, a capacity for organisation and administration, such as are rarely found singly, as are most rarely found combined in one person. He possessed oratorical powers of the highest order, he possessed the most amiable and gentle virtues, the most unbending and stern virtues. He was one of the few imperial spirits, to use Macaulay's words, whose rare prerogative it is to give to the human mind a direction which it shall retain for ages; in this case certainly to the human mind within the narrower circle of Judaism.

Samson Raphael Hirsch was born at Hamburg in 1808. His parents, to whom, as "the guardians of his childhood, the guides of his youth, the friends of his manhood," he dedicated his work *Horeb*, could not possibly foresee what fruits would be produced from the germs of mental greatness hidden in the child. They destined him for a mercantile career, and educated him accordingly. His instruction in Hebrew was not neglected; his mind eagerly absorbed the teachings administered to him, and the explanation of some text in holy writ given him by his learned great-uncle never faded from his memory.<sup>1</sup> Such training, and above all the teaching he received from Chacham Bernays fell on fruitful soil. It is true he entered on his commercial pursuits, but he soon left them to become a Rabbi. "You know," he says in his *Nineteen Letters*, under the *nom de plume* of Naphtali, "how from my earliest childhood these subjects (of religion and Judaism) engaged my mind. Educated by enlightened, religious parents, the words of holy writ attracted me at an early time. My understanding having become more mature, it was from my own choice that holy writ led me to the study of the Talmud. No influence from without, only my own determination prompted from within made me choose the position of Rabbi." He entered the University of Bonn as a student. There he lived on terms of intimacy with Abraham Geiger, a man who was in future days to represent opinions diametrically opposed to those of Hirsch. Geiger wrote about this time: "Samson Raphael Hirsch is one of my friends. He exercised great influence upon me and gladdened my life at Bonn. One evening, when we walked home together after the lecture, we conversed about Goethe's *Wahrheit und Dichtung*, which I was reading at the time. We told each other our circumstances, we regretted the isolation of Jewish theologians, and agreed to found a debating society. This brought me in close intimacy with

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<sup>1</sup> R. L. Frankfurter, the author of קול יהודה and הרבנים לבקעה. See *Jeshurun*, 1868, p. 133.

Hirsch. . . Hirsch made the first speech, to which I replied on the following Thursday. We had a long debate, in which I recognised and learned to admire his extraordinary eloquence, his acuteness, his clear and quick comprehension. . . . I respected his excellent talents, his strict virtue, and I loved the kindness of his heart.”<sup>1</sup>

Hirsch was hardly twenty-two years of age when he became Rabbi of Oldenburg. At the age of twenty-eight he published his first pamphlet, *Nineteen Letters on Judaism*; and in this very first attempt he took up a stand-point from which he had, during his long life, never occasion to recede. He commences with delineating the objections raised at that time against traditional Judaism, putting them in the mouth of a friend in the following manner:—

The object of all religion should be to bring man nearer to his destination. The latter can only consist in bliss and perfection. What bliss is offered by Judaism to its adherents? Slavery, misery, contempt is their lot. The law severs them from everything which adorns and beautifies life. All enjoyments are interdicted. And as to civilisation and culture; what greatness has been achieved by Judaism as compared with Egyptians, Phenicians, Greeks, Romans, Italians, French, English, Germans? Having nothing left of that which constitutes a people, they yet call themselves a nation. And the law itself! It enjoins isolation, which creates suspicion and distrust; it degrades the mind, so that the Jew bears contempt with equanimity; it is opposed to the cultivation of arts; its tenets obstruct the way to free speculation. Its study distorts the mind, encourages subtleties and scrutiny of paltry topics; it disqualifies it for any straight thought. How can any one who is able to enjoy the beauties of a Virgil, a Tasso, a Shakespeare, who can follow the logical conclusions of a Leibnitz and Kant—how can such a one find pleasure in the Old Testament, so deficient in form and taste, and in the senseless writings of the Talmud?

And what effect has Judaism on the heart and on life? The heart shrinks to a timid scrupulousness about unmeaning trifles. It is only taught to fear God. Every affair of life, to the most trivial one, is brought in connection with God. Life itself is an uninterrupted asceticism, a service of praying and ceremonials. That Jew is honoured most who retires from the world which he does not know and which sustains him, to waste his life in fasting and praying and the reading of senseless books.

And in our time forsooth! How is it possible to execute all these precepts while travelling, in social intercourse, in business? And the Reform movement of the time, which cuts away everything that does not accord with the idea of man's destination and the demands of the age, procures no remedy; for it is nothing but stepping outside Judaism. Why not follow up these ideas independently and consistently to their last consequences, rather than lean in such a way against opposing forces, which cannot become after all anything but arbitrary patchwork? Moreover, there is no unity, no magistracy, no authority. Everyone acts separately. The most divergent opinions obtain among Rabbis and

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<sup>1</sup> *Nachgelassene Schriften*, v., p. 18.

preachers ; from the most enlightened destructiveness to the most dogged persistency in sticking to the old edifice to be buried under its ruins.

Surely there is no shirking here, no connivance. The charge against traditional Judaism is not palliated. We see at once that the author is not the man to overlook difficulties or to mince them ; nor will he be satisfied with trying to bind up the wound in one or two places, and to make believe that thereby the illness of the whole body is stamped out.

The *Nineteen Letters* proceed to meet the said charges which in the course of the exposition are further illustrated. The method Hirsch applies has been sketched by me in the introductory remarks. It is this which stamps him as a true son of his age in the noblest sense of the word. To understand thoroughly the new tools and instruments of reasoning that have been brought to a high degree of perfection, to wield them with a master-hand, and to apply them, and them only, to the scrutiny of the highest truths is certainly progress. The keystone to his whole system, to realise which his whole life was engaged, will be found in a few words modestly put as a note under the text.<sup>1</sup>

Two revelations are given us, Nature and the Torah. For the investigation of either only one method exists. In nature the phenomena are facts ; and we are intent to spy out *à posteriori* the law of every one and the connection of all. The proof of the truth, or rather, of the probability of our assumptions is again nature itself, by the phenomena of which we have to test our assumptions, so as to reach the highest degree of certainty ever attainable, namely, to be able to say, Everything actually is as if our assumptions were true ; or, in other words, All phenomena brought under our observation can be explained by our assumption. One single opposing phenomenon therefore makes our assumption untenable. It is therefore our duty to gather all experience that can possibly be obtained about the phenomenon which is the subject of our investigation ; to examine it in its totality. Whenever and as long as we have not been able yet to discover the law and the connection of any phenomenon, which exists as a fact, the phenomenon itself remains a fact for all that. Exactly the same it is with the investigation of the Torah. The Torah is a fact like Heaven and Earth. The Torah, like Nature, has God for its ultimate cause. A fact can be ignored in neither, even if cause and connection is not discovered. We have to trace in it God's wisdom. For this purpose we have first to assume its many particulars to their whole extent as a phenomenon, and to trace out of them their connection among themselves and with the objects they refer to. Our assumptions have to be verified again by the particulars themselves ; and here again the greatest certainty obtainable is this : Everything actually is as if our assumption were true. But as in nature the phenomenon remains a fact although we have not comprehended it yet as to its cause and connection, and its existence is not dependent on our investigation, but *vice versâ*, thus also the components of the Torah remain the law even if we have not discovered the cause and connection of a single one.

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<sup>1</sup> *Nineteen Letters on Judaism*, page 96.

Hirsch commences his reply to the grave objections by doubting whether man's destination is really bliss and perfection; whether Judaism has to be measured by this principle: but this question is for the present left in suspense. True to his method, he asks the reader (his correspondent) to accept Judaism as a historical phenomenon. Its only monument being the Torah, he asks him to read the latter with no other object but to find out what Judaism is. "For we want to know Judaism; let us therefore ask: What do men become who recognise the contents of this book as the basis and rule of their lives, as revealed to them by God? Only when Judaism is known from itself, known as it exhibits itself, and then is found to be in itself untenable and objectionable—then only let him who likes reject it." It is impossible to follow in this article the line of reasoning, along which the author of the *Nineteen Letters* comes to the conclusions he draws, for this would mean to reproduce the whole book. I must content myself with quoting such passages as will give the reader an insight into the system which was finished and completed in Hirsch's mind at the very outset of his career. For the way by which he arrives at his inferences, and for the manner in which he finds them expressed in Judaism, I must refer the reader to the book itself.

Let us read, he says, the Torah, unmindful of the trouble which the reading of these writings caused us in our youth, unmindful of all prejudices which may have been instilled in us against them from many sides. Let us read them as if we never had read them. Let us put ourselves the questions: What is to me the world within me and without; what am I to that world; what am I as man and Israelite combined, as *איש ישראל*?

The inquiry proceeds step by step. A short description of nature in its beauty and usefulness is given. The Torah tells that God created all this. There is one Creator, everything else is created. This world is God's creation. Everything about us serves. Every force is a messenger of God; all matter is limitation put thereto by God, to act on it, within it, by means of it, according to God's omnipotent law. Everything serves God. What is man in this chorus of Creatures, of Servants of God? It is impossible that man alone, in a world in which everything serves, everything acts, should do nothing except either enjoy (receive), or suffer (want), and should not himself act.

Man, the image of God, *is for everything*; he is to till and to guard, his destination is to work in justice and love. It is not the earth which is for him, he is given to the earth. Everything else acts unconsciously and without will, man works

with consciousness and freedom. Our vocation, our destination is not that which comes to us but that which goes forth from us. Our actions accord with God's will if they are good, if not they are a failure. The greatness of these actions is only measured in proportion to the means vouchsafed us. Man is happy by bliss and perfection, only when these means are applied according to God's will. Man's destiny is attainable by everybody, in every condition of life. If the means given him are applied according to God's will he has attained the object of man. His whole life in its totality—his thinking, feeling, speaking, acting, also his acquiring and enjoying—was religion. This is above change, this is not affected by the vicissitudes of life.

Man's position in the creation is therefore neither that of a god nor of a slave. He is only a co-operator, but at the same time a first-born brother in respect to the nature and compass of his service. Not that is good or evil which either pleases or displeases God, but that which is either in accordance with or opposed to God's will. Man should freely submit to the law to which all other beings are unwillingly subjected. But he has the power not to submit. The demands of his body engender desires to enjoy, the power of his intellect engenders pride; either of these hinder his submission. When man suffers his animal inclinations to get the mastership to which, as a subservient slave, he subordinates the power of his intellect, he becomes the most dangerous of brutes. The author goes through the history of the first sin, of Cain, the Nephilim, Enos, Noah, by the light of these principles, which, in their turn, have been suggested by the narrative. He considers the flood and its necessity for the education of mankind; the necessity for selecting a people, and why the particular people that was selected, what it was, and what it was destined to become, so as to fulfil God's object. At the very commencement of the history of that people a man was selected to be its patriarch, who realised already in his own life the ideal of the future people. Loving God, and God alone, he relinquished country, native town, family, parents, and everything which is dear to man, to follow him who called him. He received the call to be the father of a nation which would become a blessing to all the nations of the earth, which would preserve the way of God to practise kindness and justice. He followed the call; he realised that love to the only God in his love to his children and his fellow-men. He combined love (אהבה) with (אמונה) firm trust in God and (יראה) fear of God. These qualities were inherited by Isaac and Jacob: in the former the fear of God was the

most prominent feature; the latter was above all the bearer of the trust in God. All three equally recognised God's absolute unity.

It is impossible for me to follow Hirsch throughout his investigation. All that can be done here is to quote some sentences, which by their sublimity and purity of tendency are indicative of the mind of their author, and of the nature of the aims he assigns to Judaism. And in quoting from the pamphlet I confine myself to such ideas as are of more general interest, instead of reproducing such as bear more distinctly on the subject in hand. For in doing the latter the statements must necessarily be taken out of their context; it would be impossible to give the arguments on which they are based. They would therefore appear as unsupported statements, as gratuitous, arbitrarily assumed conceptions, and would rather invite rejection than adoption. The following therefore must suffice:—

Now after all that has been said, what is it that we expect the Torah to be? It is a revelation of the means by which to execute God's will towards everything outside us by everything that is given us. In other words, it is the revelation of how to practise justice and love with everything towards everything. Add to this the idea represented by Israel, not only to realise all this in actual life, but also to preserve and to pronounce the idea which underlies all this for the education of self and others; and also everything which results from Israel's political life, which, of course, has no application outside the country and the state, and you have the contents of all the obligations the Torah lays upon you.—I. תוֹרָה. The historically revealed ideas about God, the world, humanity, and Israel, with all their consequences. And all this not as dogmas or creeds, but as principles of life to be recognised and adopted by mind and heart.—II. מִשְׁפָּטִים. Judgments. Justice towards equals from the principle of this very equality. Therefore justice to man.—III. חֻקִּים. Behests. Justice towards the lower orders of beings from the principle of their belonging to God, towards earth, plant, animal, and of all three after having become part of our self; consequently, justice towards our possessions, our body, our feeling, and our thinking.—IV. מצוות. Injunctions of love towards all beings without any claim on their side, purely in obedience to God, and from the idea of our destination as man and Israelite combined.—V. עֲרֵוֹת. Monuments of the truths underlying humanity and Judaism by symbolical representations in words and action for the individual, for Israel, and beyond Israel.—VI. עֲבוֹדָה. Exaltation and consecration of our life within, for the fulfilment of our vocation in the outer life by the purification of our judgment through symbolical action and word. The fundamental ideas are therefore: 1. Justice. To respect every being as God's creature, every property as thus ordained by God, every arrangement as God's law, and to satisfy all their claims.—2. Love. To adopt every being as a child of God, as a brother; to assist it in arriving at the end set it by God, without any claim of its own, purely in obedience to God.—3. Education. To train self and others to such activity, by being pervaded by the truths as principles of life, by giving them expression for self and others, by recovering them when lost during life.

This sketch of what the Torah offers us, of what it demands of us, the author asks us to assume as a preliminary theory which awaits its verification in the further development of the subject; although the author assures us that every single opinion uttered here is the result of the study for several years of Bible, Talmud, and Midrash. The proof of his hypotheses he promised to give at a future time, and nobly he redeemed his pledge during the fifty-three years which succeeded this first attempt.

Do not expect, he says, to find in me an infallible master. I will honestly show you where I myself am still in doubt and darkness, and I will invite you to independent investigation. For the present do not expect any more than stray thoughts. Of course you cannot but find your Judaism antagonistic to your idea of the destination of man, of bliss and perfection, a destination not recognised by Judaism, against the lower potencies of which, namely eagerness for pleasure and worship of possession, it rather is diametrically opposed. The nature of these potencies is spiritualised by nobler men, but never altogether discarded. The idea itself is the result of considering the world without God as its motor; of considering God without a world that serves him. Israel knows something else, something more sublime. . . . And that nation has borne no part in erecting the great edifice of Humanity? I will not ask, where then has one of all the other nations consciously supplied a stone towards it; whether everyone of them has not sought merely self even when being building material in God's hand. Nor will I ask, whether everything they produced brought blessing with it. But I will ask, whether it is not true, that Israel has saved out of the shipwreck of the times, saved consciously and with sacrifice of self, that, through which alone, and as a means subordinate to it, science, culture, arts, and inventions will once become really building materials of bliss for the welfare of the world. Israel in its isolation works for the unison, the brotherhood of all humanity. Almost on every page of our prayer-book we pray for the realisation of that object. All nations work towards that end, nations which existed and disappeared, with their virtues and with their vices. All contribute to the one edifice of humanity. For this, all good men of all nations have lived; the Greek with his art, the Roman with his sword, Israel in its own way. . . . . The whole question of emancipation, in as far as it concerns only our external condition, is in Judaism only of secondary interest. The nations will soon or late decide the question between right and wrong, between humanity and inhumanity; and the first awakening of a nobler, a higher calling than "to have" and "to enjoy"; the first expression of a more lively recognition of God as the only Lord and Father, and of the Earth as a holy place assigned by him to all men for the development of their humane calling, will find its expression everywhere; in the emancipation of all oppressed, also in the emancipation of the Jews. We have a higher object to obtain—and this is entirely in our own hands—the ennobling of ourselves; the realisation of Judaism through Jews. This leads us to the question of "Reform." Certainly, we are far from what we should be. Only look at the picture of life, the execution of which the Torah sets us as our task! What strides we have to make, what distance to traverse, what height to ascend! And therefore, Reform by all means! Let us apply all our power, let us summon everything which is good and noble within us to ascend that height. Reform! But its object can be no

other except the realisation of Judaism by Jews in our time ; the realisation of that eternal ideal, under the circumstances in which the time has placed us. Education, elevation of the age to the Torah, but not levelling the Torah according to the time, or depressing the summit to the shallowness of our life. . . . That great man to whom, and to whom alone, we owe the preservation of practical Judaism up to our own time, Maimonides, produced much good and much evil, because he reconciled and did not develop Judaism naturally out of itself. His mind was framed in the Arabic-Greek mould, so was his ideal of life. He penetrated Judaism from without, he introduced opinions which he had adopted from elsewhere, and with these he reconciled. . . . What was the consequence? When these opinions produced their natural results ; when some deemed themselves to be above the guidance of the commandments which were represented to them as nothing but guides, and above the given explanations which had no meaning for them ; others, who had a deeper insight into Judaism, became averse to that philosophical spirit ; others, again, became enemies of all spirit. . . . Only a few in the whole space of that time stood in their investigations purely within Judaism and built it up intellectually out of itself. Conspicuous above all are the author of *Cusri* and Nachmanides.

Theosophy and talmudical topics are considered next.

When the yoke commenced to be slackened, and the spirit again felt some freedom of movement, another brilliant and most estimable person arose to be a leader in the process of development. But neither did this man draw his freer intellectual progress out of Judaism. He was great in metaphysics and æsthetics, he studied the Bible for philological and æsthetical purposes. He did not construe Judaism as a science out of itself. He defended it only against political narrowness and pietistical demands from certain Christians. He was at the same time practically a religious Jew ; he showed his brethren and the world that one can be a strictly religious Jew, *and yet* shine forth and be celebrated as the Jewish Plato. This *and yet* decided. There was no help for it ; the direction was given and followed, and had to be gone through to its last consequences destructive of Judaism. . . . And there it is that the disease lies. The idea of Judaism is wanting ; the idea in accordance with its history and its teachings ; and, in consequence of this, the love to these latter is wanting, which is the only counterpoise against allurements from without and from within. The spirit inherent in Judaism is the only goal that can save us. Compare with this the reforming tendencies of our time. Be angry with none, respect them all. All feel that there is something wrong ; all intend to promote that which is good, according to their lights ; all have in view the lasting welfare of their brethren. If they have not recognised that which is good ; if they have failed when desiring to grasp at the truth, in most cases it is not their fault ; they share the mistake with past generations. Is, then, this the reform which is wanted, to take up some standpoint or other from outside Judaism ; some foreign idea of human destination or emancipation, and now, accordingly, to curtail or enervate the fulness of Judaism ? Is that reform, to stand within Judaism, but Judaism not understood, and merely trim to the requirements of a time which only feels the external appearance of a part of Judaism understood as little—the synagogue service ? . . . And now the schools, which contain all our hopes of the future ! They are as the schools of the time. Youth is trained to make a living by handicraft, trade, art, science. The understanding is partly developed, but in this, also, the memory is being more exercised



than the reasoning faculties. But where is the heart formed, Judaism taught, the school penetrated by the Jewish spirit, so that it may at a later time pervade life? Where are men trained who recognise themselves to live in God's world, with faculties belonging to God, for the execution of his will—who rejoice in their vocation, who ardently and lovingly cleave to the name of "Jew," which summons them to be the bearers of such doctrine through time and fortune, through suffering and want, and, at the same time, to know the world and themselves, to learn history, to understand the present time, and to look upon themselves as building material for the future?

Two tendencies are opposed to one another. The followers of the one, having inherited Judaism, but not understanding it, obey its behests from habit without its spirit; carry it in their hands as a holy mummy, afraid to rouse the spirit. Those on the opposite path partly glow with noble fire for the promotion of the welfare of their brethren, but consider Judaism to be an appearance without spirit, and belonging to a time long gone to its grave. They search for the spirit but do not find it, and in their best endeavours to succour the Jews are in danger of severing the last heartstrings of Judaism from want of knowledge.

And now, when these opposite positions approach each other in thousands of varieties, and therewith demonstrate that both are in error, which remedy is left? Is it sufficient to found schools, to reform the service in the synagogue, on such rent and riven ground? The spirit, the inner principle of life is wanting, and you never succeed in calling it forth by polishing the outer frame.

There is only one remedy. The atonement must arise from the point where the sin was committed. The remedy is this: to forget the hereditary conceptions and mis-conceptions about Judaism; to take up the sources of Judaism; to read, to study, to comprehend them for practical use; to draw from them the conception Judaism has about God, the world, humanity, Israel. To know, to comprehend Judaism from itself, to raise it out of its contents, to a science of practical wisdom. . . . And then, be unconcerned what others may think of your study, whether you will be unable to become conspicuous any longer among the heroes of subtle disputations, subtle indeed, but not doing homage to truth and life as their objects. Be unconcerned whether or not you will be able to become conspicuous in the various branches of knowledge which you study only as auxiliary sciences for your own sake. Be unconcerned whether you will become unfit to shine. You will learn to raise yourself to the light of truth, to the ardour and height of life.

Once there you will understand Israel's vicissitudes and teachings, you will understand life as the impress of such doctrine permeated and saturated with spirit. Spirit in everything, from the structure of the language to the edifice of life's actions, a spirit inflated by the Spirit of the only God.

That were indeed a work for the disciples of knowledge! But then the results of such science have to be transplanted into real life. Schools for the Jews! The saplings of your nation must be educated to be Jews, to be sons and daughters of Judaism, of such as you learned to know and understand, to respect and love as the life of your life. Let them master the language of the Bible as they master the language of the land in which they dwell. Let them learn to think in either, let their hearts be made to feel, their mind to think. Let the Bible become for them the book of the teaching for life, and let them be able to perceive its word throughout life! Let their eyes be opened to view the world around them as God's world and themselves as God's servants therein. Let

their ear be opened to history as the education of all men to such service. Then let them learn from the written and traditional law in its practical consequences to comprehend, to respect, and to love their life as such spiritual service of God, that they rejoice in the name of Jew and in a life issuing therefrom, in spite of sneers and wants. Let the way they are trained to find a living, as also the gaining of their livelihood in real life, be a means, not an end. Let them be taught to value life not according to position, to wealth, to fame; but according to the inner vocation which is full of real life, of worship of God. Do not let them subordinate the demands of their vocation to the demands of sensuality and comfort, but *vice versa*. And in the meanwhile—until Israel's houses are built up by such sons and daughters of Israel—let us supplicate, let us beg in the houses of the parents that they do not disturb the work of the school, that they in icy coldness or bluntness of spirit, do not nip and kill the young buds in the minds of their children. Let the noble spark be blown into blaze also in the hearts of the parents, and where it is too late for understanding, at least respect be obtained—and would it not then become different in Israel?

It will become different in Israel. Our time leads unmistakably towards it. The time suffers from the pains of labour. Better are these pains than the painless, but also joyless and hopeless house of the barren woman. It may be that this pain will outlive ourselves, our children, perhaps our grandchildren. But then the grandchild will rejoice in the offspring come to light and life, called "a Judaism which knows itself." The time gives one security for this result. It consists in the tendency to think about, to comprehend, to penetrate into that which is to be the subject of respect. As soon as the mind has recognised the fruitlessness of its endeavours which are devoid alike of foundation and of object; of the complying with the demands of the fleeting moment which are rated above their value; as soon as the mind is penetrated by the consciousness that life must be based only upon idea and truth obtained from within—it will wake up to the questions: "What am I as a Jew?" "What is Judaism?" And we shall no longer try to obtain the solution of that question from the chairs and writings of non-Jewish scholars, who often knew Judaism only from its reflection in a distorting mirror, and who believe themselves obliged partly to destroy the Torah and Judaism, in order to construct that which is their own. Nor will they go for solution to the writings of modern reformers who only consider external points; nor to the writings of such Jewish sages as choose the foundations for their system from outside Judaism. But they will turn to the Bible and the Talmud, the fundamental sources of Judaism; pre-supposing nothing except the endeavour only to comprehend the idea of life out of Judaism, and Judaism as an institution for real life. This will lead to the end, to produce that which is true and vital as truth and life, after the ancient but much forgotten rule—to learn, to teach, to observe, to act.

If Hirsch had done nothing but to indicate the true method according to which the essence of Judaism has to be recognised, it would by itself have been a remarkable effort. If he had left to others the task of tracing the truths which he pronounced to be symbolised by the precepts of the Torah; the task of trying, by the rules laid down by him, to induce his brethren to renounce the conventional theories which were destructive of the observance of the Jewish laws, he would

already have had great claims to the gratitude of his brethren. Others would perhaps have undertaken to educate Jewish men and women with this object in view. Others would perhaps have created schools for both sexes, which, besides giving sound and sincere religious instruction, would at the same time have been able to pass muster even among the efficient educational establishments as superintended by the authorities in Germany. It is possible that this would have been done. But it is certain that all this and much more was attempted and realised by Hirsch.

Immediately after the *Nineteen Letters* his *Horeb* appeared ; which is a concise and lucid compendium of the traditional observances, explained as symbols after the principles laid down by him in his first work. But he was certainly not the first who attempted to explain one or the other of the Jewish laws as symbols ; as expressions of certain thoughts which they were meant to represent. But with Hirsch such an idea took quite a unique shape. He subjected his own theories to the most severe criticism. He knew that "Symbolical explanations, when practised in the style of an amateur, could not but be injurious to the knowledge of Judaism ; that it would be a mere play of wit, and degenerate into a mere display of ingenuity. In consequence of this it is easy for every shallow mind, for every mountebank, whenever it suits his purposes, to make such efforts ridiculous in the eye of ignorant people."<sup>1</sup> He knew the objections which could be raised, and actually were raised, against the proposition that the observances of Judaism were meant to be symbols ; that they had for their object to keep some idea alive within us and constantly before our eyes.

He wrote his *Outlines of a Jewish Symbolic*,<sup>2</sup> in which he laid down the rules and guiding principles for the tracing of the ideas underlying the Jewish observances. In these articles he proves beyond doubt that a Jewish Symbolic really does exist, and the "preliminary remarks" in which he dwells on the theory of Symbols in general are a noteworthy sample of a philosophical disquisition. Is this the same eloquent preacher who so often kept his audience spellbound by the flow of his language, by the ardour with which he impresses his convictions upon his hearers ; by the boldness of his metaphors which never descending to anything bordering upon platitude, always struck home by their aptness and their truth ? The sixteen pages containing these "preliminary remarks"

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<sup>1</sup> Jeshurun, 1857-1858.

<sup>2</sup> *Grundlinien einer jüdischen Symbolik*, Jeshurun, 1857, p. 615.

are decidedly hard reading. The concatenation of ideas is so close, the logic so severe, the special cases preferred for induction so exhaustive yet so sparingly used, the illustrations so striking, yet so soberly managed, that to give an extract would mean to reproduce the whole. To use a homely phrase, you cannot put a pin in. Here as elsewhere Hirsch displays the same judicial combination of induction and deduction, the same consciousness of the limits set to that class of reasoning which no human intellect is able to pass.

There is one ordeal to which every interpretation of a symbol has invariably to submit, and that is, the verification whether the thing or the action recognised to be a symbol proves in all its essential parts, and in its connection with the respective persons, with the conditions of locality and time, with the accompanying words, to be of such a nature that the detected idea can have been the one intended by the author of the symbol. The most ingenious interpretation will have to be dismissed, if opposed to one of these essential conditions. It is the same method and the same result, which ought to prevail in every sober interpretation of any document. A verse may be interpreted differently by ten different commentators, but only that one will be recognised as the correct one, according to which all idiomatical peculiarities and sentences, and the connection of all the relations in which they appear have been taken into account. Neither here nor there mathematical certainty can be obtained. That which is erroneous will however be dismissed with the most absolute certainty; and for a positive assumption we shall have to decide after the motive: that after careful consideration, everything which had to be taken into account is of such a nature that the assumption can be true."

Having indicated the method applied by Hirsch in evolving the ideas of which Judaism is the representative, I regret not being able to discuss in the present article the system in which it results. It seems paradoxical to say that his system was the fruit of a few years' thought only, and yet was not completed in a lifetime. In his first pamphlet Hirsch enunciated a system finished as to its fundamental principles, and thought out as to its details. His whole life was devoted to elucidate the latter, to carry them back to their first principles, to gain for them recognition and adoption by his brethren. All his literary productions must be judged in this light. His Commentaries, the magazine *Jeshurun* edited by him, his critical articles, his polemical writings, his occasional pamphlets, are all of them so many materials necessary to the rearing up of his system. I must for the present satisfy myself with merely mentioning them; but to understand them a searching survey would be necessary.

One of Hirsch's objects, to gain for his views and principles the recognition and adoption of his brethren, was never for a moment lost sight of by him. And he possessed all the qualities necessary to ensure success in this direction. For there

was no human instinct of the nobler kind which was not strongly and vividly operating within him. If Hirsch had been no more than a man of profound thought, he would no doubt have made his mark in the world of letters. If in addition to this he had been also a man of genuine and ardent feeling, and of great eloquence, he would certainly have been also great as an orator. But all these qualities, and each of them of the highest order, were in Hirsch combined with all those qualifications which distinguish the man of action. Thought, feeling, and deed were always in harmony. Hirsch's every thought was an action, he never acted without realizing at the same time an idea.

One word about his success as a preacher. With a preacher like Hirsch it is as with a great singer. The effect of the performance must be felt but cannot be described and is lost to posterity. Whenever in his sermons some struggle, some hesitation was noticed, it was because he was applying to himself the reins, not the spur. He had to restrain the great copiousness in the outpour of ideas, in the exuberant flow of words which suggested themselves to him; and with the greatest skill he selected on the spur of the moment those that were most fitting. The effect his addresses had on his audience was always electric. Suffice it to say that the instances were by no means few, that men of culture and education entered the synagogue with opinions antagonistic to his, and left it again with serious doubts as to the correctness of their views, to end in becoming his most ardent followers.

But it was by his pedagogical achievements in the founding of and presiding over schools, and by his statesmanlike qualities in the organisation of communities, that he exhibited himself most as a man of action. That he knew his own mind and never acted at random, but always in accordance with settled principles, is evidenced by his many articles on communal affairs. Again I am unable to discuss them, and must therefore request my readers to inquire for themselves if they wish to know Hirsch in quite another character. That his theories were sound, that his activity proceeded in the right direction, cannot be shown better than by pointing to the congregation which he created in Frankfort-on-the-Main.

"Created," this is the proper expression. Rough material to work with he had hardly any. He commenced his career as Rabbi of the "Religionsgesellschaft" with scarcely a dozen congregants. The site on which he had to rear his structure was of the most unpromising nature. Peter the Great, when selecting a swamp to build his magnificent city on, had not

made a less judicious choice than Hirsch when he chose to make Frankfort-on-the-Main the citadel of observant Judaism.<sup>1</sup> Nowhere had the spirit of persecution of Jews by Jews been so prominent as in that city. Fidelity to Jewish observances, the study of Mishna and Talmud, even of the Bible in Hebrew, was being systematically stamped out. The council of that ancient Jewish congregation brought all the strength of the secular authorities to bear upon those of their brethren who still tenaciously clung to the execution of their religious duties. They pursued their fanatical intentions with a tenacity of purpose worthy of a better cause. By the machinations of that council it was, between the year 1818 and 1838, an indictable offence, checked and punished by the police, to teach the young the Bible in Hebrew and the Talmud. Teachers and scholars actually hid themselves in lofts and other hiding-places when studying these subjects in order to elude the tyrannical powers of the council. But the latter was on the alert; the hiding-places were discovered; the teachers were banished the city, and those men who had undertaken the care of providing the means for pursuing these studies were forbidden to do so under the penalty of fifty florins each. An educational establishment for the study of the Talmud together with general secular subjects, to which a generous member had bequeathed the sum of 50,000 florins, was suppressed, and the council boasts of this feat in an official document. Since times immemorial there had existed in Frankfort a society under the name of "Tsitsit Society." One of the objects was for its members to gather every Sabbath after the Synagogal Service in a private house to edify themselves by reading and interpreting certain sections of the Pentateuch and the Prophets. But in 1842 this also was declared to be an indictable offence. The council effected a prohibition of these gatherings and the society ceased to exist. It would lead me too far to relate how the Burial Society was tyrannised over by the council, and its members deprived of their most sacred, most humane, and noblest privileges. They hindered the restoration and adornment of the two chief synagogues; they neglected one of the most necessary Jewish institutions, and those of the neighbouring townships had to be used by the faithful. They abolished the ancient custom of providing prisoners and such patients as were in non-Jewish hospitals with kosher food. I cannot proceed with a full enumeration of the malpractices of the council. It seemed as if the council

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<sup>1</sup> For the following particulars see Hirsch's pamphlet *Die Religion im Bunde mit dem Fortschritt von einem Schwarzen*, Frankfort o/M., 1854.

had extinguished the last spark of observant Judaism in Frankfort-on-the-Main.

But eleven men of that city turned themselves, in 1851, to Samson Raphael Hirsch. They asked him to come over to them and help them. Hirsch responded to the call. He resigned his position as Chief Rabbi of Moravia and Silesia which, besides being a place of honour and dignity, had also considerable emoluments attached to it; he gave up his seat in the Moravian Diet, and went to the assistance of the handful of workers in the cause of freedom of conscience and religion. As far as human efforts are concerned, it was he, and he alone, who must be called the author of that flourishing community called the "Israelitische Religionsgesellschaft," and of those first-class Jewish Educational establishments, which are, without exaggeration, the only ones of their kind in the whole world. It would require a separate article to do justice to the statesmanlike qualities in the noblest sense of the word, the unbending force of will, the untiring activity, the knowledge of the world, the powers of organisation and management, and at the same time the stern resistance to any sacrifice of principle, which put the stamp of greatness on this remarkable man.

How was it that Hirsch, who terminated his life at the age of eighty-one, during a long period of speech and writing, never contradicted himself, never was obliged to recede from positions formerly maintained by him? The reason is this; because Hirsch started with that which other great men are often unable to reach at the end of their careers. He did not start before he had carefully examined every detail of his system; before he had measured his own powers and made himself thoroughly acquainted with the nature of the material on which he intended to exert his faculties; before he had prepared himself to wield with master-hand the instruments; before he had traced out in his own mind the kind of opposition he would have to encounter; before he had estimated how much success could be reasonably expected, without dreaming of impossible and miraculous results. It was the rare privilege vouchsafed to this man that in his life was compressed in its widest and most profound sense that old rule of Judaism, which he recommends to his readers, "to learn, to teach, to observe, to execute."

S. A. HIRSCH.

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